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FRUIT GROWERS ORGANIZE.

First Steps Towards Union in Hawaii are Taken.

Preliminary arrangements toward the combining of the fruit growers of this Island were made last Tuesday morning. Almost fifteen fruit men assembled in Firemen's hall, brought together by Dr. Nicholas Russel, to consider the formation of an association, and the first steps toward the accomplishment of a worthy end were taken.

J. Castle Ridgway was appointed temporary chairman and Harold I. Cruzan secretary. After calling the meeting to order and making a few opening remarks, Mr. Ridgway called upon Dr. Russel to state the object of the meeting.

"Gentlemen," the doctor began, "I received a paper recently from Germany, in which I noticed the advertisement of a lottery. By paying \$5 a man might win \$500,000. The advertisement went on to say that while this might be gambling, there was not a business in existence into which the elements of gambling did not enter. I was particularly struck by this point, and when I came to think of it I was unable to refute the charge made by the writer. Take for instance our experience in coffee. Success was assured. The climate was just what we wanted, the soil was very rich and fertile, labor was cheap and plentiful, and yet altogether we dropped about \$1,500,000. It was a gambling venture and as one, it fell through.

"Take into consideration the most honest business in the world, farming. Yet success in a horse race is more sure than in agriculture. If the climate fails you, if you happen to be attacked by plant pests or if the numerous rate wars cause a constant fluctuation in freight rates your whole crop is liable to go back on you, and leave you without even your expenses paid. Then again, if the climate is all that can be desired, and the plant life is exterminated, there is liable to be an overproduction and prices go down to bed rock leaving the farmer with little or no profit.

"The more I reflected on the point raised by the German writer the more I began to think that he was right. This element of gambling enters into every walk in life. It demoralizes the common people and in particular the economic conditions of the country. Such an unstable condition of affairs cannot continue, or we will inevitably drift into the condition of the old Romans, who were unable to withstand the attacks of their northern neighbors because of this very element of gambling in their natures. It is the duty of every man, every citizen, and every one with the good of the country at heart, to reorganize the social and economical side of life so that this taint of gambling will be entirely eradicated.

"Prior to the present time, sugar was the only product that could be raised here. Now, however, we have been assured that a steamer is here to stay making trips every five weeks, and there is a promise that should our business increase sufficiently a second one would be put on. With the coming of this steamer, a new branch of business opens.

Now, with the proper communications, fruit raising is possible. We have been offered a good price for bananas, about one cent a pound. Are we going to sit still and work individually, until the market is overcrowded and we are undersold by all the Japs and Chinese here, or are we going to combine for mutual protection?

"Let us consider the Fruit Growers' Association of Southern California. When fruit raising first started, the farmers were at the mercy of a few commission firms in San Francisco. These firms united forcing the ranchers to take their own prices for the fruit. The fruit men had no say whatever in the matter and had to let their fruit rot, or obey the dictates of the commission merchants. Now that they have organized all is changed. If the San Francisco merchants do not pay what the Association wants them to, the fruit is sent to the Eastern market and sold. I have

friends in that association and they all assure me that prices are much better since all are mutually protected.

"We on the Islands should follow their example. A committee should be appointed to draw up a constitution similar to that of the Southern California growers, confer with them in regard to any desirable amendments and place the local business on a firm foundation. No steps should be taken until we are a chartered body. Then we could take shipping contracts with the Matson line, and make arrangements for wholesale shipments to certain San Francisco firms for so many years, together with the weight and quality of the bananas and fruit. We might even send our own salaried commissioner to San Francisco to make arrangements for us. This, however, is all secondary now. We must first make our interests sure, and eliminate gambling from the business."

Chairman Ridgway said that the main danger was from the Japanese growers and that the whites must combine. It was then learned from Messrs. Tom Cooke and G. Gehr that 65,000 bunches of bananas were consumed in San Francisco monthly. The Enterprise would handle about 6000 bunches at the rate of 55 cents a bunch. The main trouble in shipping bananas was that the bunches had to be shipped on deck, as they would ripen quite rapidly in the hold. The New Orleans market regulated the prices in San Francisco although the Hilo bananas generally brought a higher price than the West Indian fruit.

Mr. Ryan now spoke at some length on the question of rates.

"The one great proposition that appeals to me," he said "in this business, is the question of rates. All this talk of liberality by the transportation companies sounds well, but it does not wash. It reminds me of bringing rice and sweetmeats to stone gods. These men are here to make money and they will make as much as they can. It comes right down to a clear question of dollars and cents. What we want to know is how much they are going to charge us and how much they will be able to take. The most perfect monopoly in the world is the inter-island steamship service here and before we go any farther we do not want to contribute to any other yoke which we will have to bear."

Dr. Russell then moved that a committee of three be appointed to confer with Mr. Matson in regard to freight rates, and to draw up a constitution using the one of the Southern California Association as a model. The motion was carried and Chairman Ridgway appointed Dr. Russel, H. B. Gehr and Mr. Ryan.

The committee was then instructed to notify the members when they were ready to report, and the meeting then adjourned. Those who attended were Messrs. J. Castle Ridgway, H. I. Cruzan, Lycurgus, Alfonso, Gehr, Stone, Cooke, Serrao, Shaw, Ryan, Simmerman, Duntzer, Augusteisen, Rodrigues and Dr. Russel.

McBryde Sugar Company, Limited, at the annual meeting of stockholders March 28, consented to a new bond issue for the purpose of retiring the present bonded indebtedness together with the floating debt of the corporation. The amount was not stated, being left for future determination. Adjournment to the call of the president was taken.

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